

Media Coverage of Entrepreneurial Innovation as a Determinant of Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract—Entrepreneurship has been widely recommended by scholars and professionals as one of the major ways to address the ever growing level of unemployment and continuous dwindling resources in Nigeria. Unfortunately, it is also a consensus among stakeholders that conditions in the country are largely unfriendly for the survival of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Entrepreneurship may not survive without exposure or publicity. This, therefore, crystallizes the role of media coverage in the development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Hence, this study examines the extent to which entrepreneurial innovation is given coverage in Nigerian national newspapers and how this can lead to sustainable development in Nigeria. Vanguard, The Punch, The Guardian and Business Day newspapers were purposively selected and issues from 2013 to 2015 for each were used for the study. This paper recommends ways in which entrepreneurship can be enhanced through media partnership.

Keywords—Entrepreneurship, innovation, media coverage, sustainable development

I. INTRODUCTION

The term ‘development’ invokes hope that efforts are being made to reduce or completely eliminate current problems to give way to a more conducive state of human existence. Colletta defines development as “a process of positive socio economic change in the quality and level of human existence which is aimed at raising the standards of living, quality of life and human dignity” (Dandaura, 1999, p.94).

Amodu (2008) observes that Colletta’s definition puts humanity at the centre of every developmental process. Humanity is both the initiator and recipient of development since its measurement is predicated on the quality of life and the level of positive socio-economic changes. Over the years, however, scholars have argued that some developmental processes solve immediate problems but endanger opportunities of future generations to achieve their own development.

A. Statement of Problem

The media’s promotion and encouragement of entrepreneurial innovations in Nigeria are of utmost importance for sustainable growth and development. Unemployment in Nigeria has forced the drive for entrepreneurship and this has become the new focus for development. Unfortunately, several media organizations tend to cover only the stories that benefit them commercially. This

means that the media are not contributing adequately to the development in Nigeria. To this end, this study would attempt to answer the following questions:

B. Research Questions

- 1) What is the extent of coverage given to entrepreneurial stories in selected Nigerian newspapers?
- 2) To what extent have the media given exposure to SMEs in Nigeria?
- 3) What are the various entrepreneurial themes covered by the media?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent decades, the media have become an area of study for many scholars, considering the facilitating role they play in the socio-economic cum political sphere of any nation. It becomes unnecessary, according to Oboh (2004, p.337), to conduct any isolated research on the media without considering the connection of their activities with other sectors in the society.

In a survey spanning 1971-2004, Hang and Weezel (2005, p.1) analyzed the number of articles with set out objectives to study the relationship between entrepreneurship and media; the results showed that studies in this area were extremely limited. Meanwhile, majority of the articles found according to both researchers could be easily grouped as studies of entrepreneurship in media- only a very few studies ever conducted within the study period considered the impact of media activities on entrepreneurship. Thus, very few efforts have been made to research the role of the media in the entrepreneurship phenomenon (Owolabi, 2014, p.46; Hindle and Klyver 2006, p.9).

In a quest to provide a summary to the many definitions of development given by scholars, certain key words have continued to reoccur over the years when reference to entrepreneurship is made: exploitation of market opportunity (Schumpeter 1934, 1965), Risk taking (Drucker 1970, Kanbur 1979, p.773), creation and innovation (Bolton and Thompson 2000), imitation and creative thinking (Hisrich 1990), etc.

Similarly, The Georgia Economic Developers Association (GEDA) defines Economic development as the sustainable process involving the creation of opportunities economically for the citizens whilst stimulating business investment, diversifying the public revenue base and enhancing quality of

life (GEDA, 1999). The emphasis seems to be placed on the creation of opportunities that foster higher flow of revenue and better quality of life for the populace.

A. Sustainable Development- The Gap

Coyne and Leeson (2004, p.21) note that despite the “prescriptions put forth by Smith (1776), many contributors have struggled to achieve the goals of economic prosperity”. According to these Scholars, merely listing policies aimed at economic development are not enough to birth economic development talk less of sustainable development; this is reportedly the case in nations like Moldova, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Romania, etc. where the existence of well-thought economic policies have not been commensurate with the envisaged levels of economic development, not even mentioning sustainable development; something must surely be missing. Right through the 20th century and before then, the media have been seen as merely a tool to inform and build popularity of ideologies as well as to improve the standard and quality of life for many.

The role the media coverage has to play in entrepreneurial innovation and development goes beyond the traditional publicity and informative role. The Gatekeeping theory firmly fits as an axle to underpin this work. The Gatekeeping theory was first used by Kurt Lewin, however, David Manning White (1950) is most popular for applying this theory in the news production process (Oso, 2014, p. 203). The major tenet of this theory seeks to describe the subjective inputs that go alongside editorial authority to determine what is reported or not reported in the media.

According to Oso (2014, p. 204), Manning observed “how highly subjective, how based on the “gatekeeper’s” own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations the communication of news really is...” Oso (2014, p. 205) retorts that the major issue in concern as this theory relates with the journalistic practice “boils down to whose voices and viewpoints are allowed into the symbolic arena or discourse field to play, structure and inform, and shape the picture in our heads” and surely that of the larger spectrum of media users nationally.

With a certain expectation level of reportage by the media on entrepreneurship, the reverse ends up being the case. Therefore, the media may be acting based on the subjective prejudices of specific individuals saddled with ‘editorial authority’.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

Content analysis research method was adopted for this study. Through content analysis, the study examined the frequency of coverage of entrepreneurial stories, the story types in the different papers, and the central themes of coverage, including the prominence that these stories were given within the period of study.

Four Nigerian newspapers: Vanguard, The Punch, The Guardian and Business Day newspapers were purposively selected and issues from 2013 to 2015 for each were used for the study. The census method was used to select the stories from the four newspapers for analysis. All the issues per month, for each of the four selected newspapers were chosen,

and a total of 1,122 stories were found. The instrument used for data collection was the coding sheets developed for this study. This was done to have an organized data for easy interpretation. The Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data which are presented in simple frequency tables below.

IV. RESULTS

Table 1: Distribution of Entrepreneurial Stories in the Newspapers

| | Percent (%) |
|--------------|------------------|
| Vanguard | 40.8 |
| The Punch | 20.9 |
| The Guardian | 15.2 |
| Business Day | 23.1 |
| Total | 100% n = 1122 |

To measure the extent of coverage given to entrepreneurial stories in the selected newspapers, the Vanguard newspaper led the group with a total 40.8% news stories. Business Day could have done better being a newspaper focused in the area of study. While The Guardian newspaper is at the rear with 15.2%, it is good to know that the four selected newspapers all had news items on the subject. The interesting side to this analysis is that in terms of pages, The Guardian newspaper has more pages yet it had the least entrepreneurial stories.

Table 2: Story Placement and Media Role

| | Percent (%) |
|---------------|------------------|
| Front Page | 0.4 |
| Inside Page | 99.4 |
| Center Spread | 0.2 |
| Total | 100% n = 1122 |

Placement of news stories in the newspaper shows the significance or newsworthiness of a particular story. From this study, a larger percentage of the entrepreneurial stories were given the inside page treatment (99.4%), the front and center spread pages had little representation of such stories, as each had 0.4% and 0.2%. This raises the concern of the possibility of entrepreneurial stories not being considered important by the newspaper. Information arrives in the newsroom from a wide range of sources; an editor is expected to make a decision on which of these news stories is more newsworthy. Due to the high competition by other news houses, the editor decides on what would most get the readers’ attention and gives them places of importance. Arguably, The Punch Newspaper, which has a section allotted for Entrepreneurs and SMEs called, AM Business: Personal finance and small business financial information and Vanguard newspaper’s Financial Vanguard and Real Sector Now pull outs, would claim to have dedicated spaces to entrepreneurial stories. These papers forget that it is their responsibilities to sets the agenda on what the public should see as important. Thus, by burying these stories in the

pages of the newspapers has little to say what it comes to what the media consider as important in the entrepreneurial context.

Table 3: Various Themes Covered

| | Percent (%) |
|---|---------------------------------|
| SMEs | 23.4 |
| Development | 9.6 |
| Youth Empowerment | 5.3 |
| Funds Acquisition/Investment | 11.1 |
| Business Seminars | 12.7 |
| Innovations | .9 |
| Inventions | .6 |
| Entrepreneurship | 16.9 |
| Partnership/Sponsorship | 4.9 |
| Awareness | 1.4 |
| Entrepreneurial trainings/Skill Acquisition | 4.8 |
| Donations by NGOs | .5 |
| Women entrepreneurship | 2.1 |
| Governmental support | 2.9 |
| Competition with foreign businesses | .3 |
| Job creation/Unemployment | 1.8 |
| Other | .7 |
| Total | 100.0 n = 1122 |

There were several variables that were sought for from the four papers vis-a-vis entrepreneurship in Nigeria as can be seen in the table above. Almost half of the stories, 40.3% were concerned with small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs). However, it was unfortunate to discover that governmental support and partnership/sponsorship had 2.9% and 4.9% respectively. This perhaps accounts for the low job creation, 1.8%, recorded for the period of study, 2013 – 2015 and yet the government seeks “rapid economic recovery through SMEs”. There is a saying that “to whom much is given, much is expected”. With the level of low investment in the entrepreneurial sector thus far, what are the likely expectations and how then can the entrepreneurial innovation needed for the nation’s sustainable development be harnessed

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Naude (2013) discovered that entrepreneurship is advantageous for economic growth and development and that in the past three decades, it has substantially reduced poverty in several countries, one of which is China. Also, the claims of Owolabi (2014) and Hindle et al. (2006) that state “few efforts have been made to research how the media affects entrepreneurship”.

To verify if the media are playing any role in the exposure of entrepreneurial stories in Nigeria, which is the focal point of this study, newspapers such as The Punch, The Guardian, Vanguard and Business Day newspapers were examined. The Punch newspaper has a section allotted for Entrepreneurs and SMEs called AM Business: Personal finance and small business financial information. The Vanguard newspaper has two pull outs called Financial Vanguard and Real Sector to fulfil their obligation to the masses by ensuring that they are well informed all round including the business angle. Though, other discussions were published on these sections, a larger percentage of the stories were on tips to become successful entrepreneurs, interviews on entrepreneurs, news on indigenous products, etc. On The Guardian and Business Day, entrepreneur related stories appeared on the business or financial section of the papers. There were more of Straight news stories (62.9%) than any other class of news.

It was evident that the Nigerian work force, both public and private sectors, have seen the need and the place of entrepreneurship in developing the economy. For example, the Entrepreneurship Academy (TEA) put together by Olumide Emmanuel Foundation (OEF) and the Common Sense Group were able to graduate 143 entrepreneurs and six (6) of the grandaunts were given one million naira empowerment grant each to start off (Vanguard, January 28, 2013, p.38). Various banks also publicly stated their support for SMEs e.g. The Bank of Industry (BOI), and The Bank of Agriculture (BOA) provided funds for SMEs development in the country. On the 26th of June, 2015, The Punch reported that “The government through Bank of Industry (BOI) is turning attention to SMEs subsector as Nigeria seeks rapid economic recovery” p. 33. Following the government approval and support of SMEs, the Vice President of Nigeria, Professor Osibajo, averred that “SME is a tool for industrial development” (The Punch, 4th September, 2015, p.27). Another instance of how important entrepreneurship is to a nation’s development as reported by Vanguard (March 26, 2013, p.21) was when the Federal Government tasks entrepreneurs on job creation whilst also revealing its commitment to create the enabling environment. All of these point to the fact that the media indeed play a vital role in exposing entrepreneurial activities in Nigeria because without them, none of these would have been known.

These results are in line with Owolabi’s (2014, p.46) assertion that states “as regards entrepreneurship, economy and sustainable development, that the media could aid development in these areas by providing the required information that can empower the ‘would-be’ entrepreneurs or innovators at various levels (individually and collectively) to make informed decisions that have the capacity to spark off constructive economic and sustainable development.

From the four Nigerian newspapers that were studied, it was discovered that the Vanguard newspaper had the most related stories with 40.8%. There was a close call between Business Day and The Punch, as each had 23.3% and respectively

20.9%. Also, a little above one third of the stories were published in 2013, while 2014 and 2015 had related stories at 31.4% and 32.7% each. More so, most of the published stories were on Nigerian entrepreneurs within Nigeria. It was also discovered that 0.8% and 0.5% of these entrepreneurs were Nigerian entrepreneurs in Africa and outside Africa respectively.

VI. CONCLUSION

It was thus discovered that from the four newspapers analyzed, there were 1,122 number of stories. It is evident that SMEs and entrepreneurship were relatively exposed between 2013 and 2015, but the question as to if these level of exposure has led to economic development is uncertain. For this to occur, there should be adequate governmental support in terms of funds, facilities, etc. It is in making provision for these things that an average entrepreneur can contribute to the development of the economy.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

- Though there was quite a number of reports on SMEs, they were majorly concerned with support for SMEs and entrepreneurs, interviews, importance of SMEs to the economy, etc. There were hardly reports on the actual activities of SMEs, and youth empowerment through entrepreneurship was also low. It is, therefore, recommended that the above mentioned areas be added to the line of reports in the media. Furthermore, like The Punch that has a section for SME related stories, other newspapers should do same, and in the same vain, ensure that they are strictly used to publish articles on SMEs.
- Reports on government support partnership/sponsorship was low as results show each having 2.9% and 4.9%. If we argue that the media report what is available to be reported, then the government and other organizations should actually support SMEs and entrepreneurs, not just on paper, but in reality.
- Finally, if the media are to support entrepreneurs, they should lower their media space prices. By so doing, SMEs and entrepreneurs can advertise themselves and further create awareness for their brands and services as the case maybe.

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